

## **MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS PROJECT PERFORMANCE REPORT**

**STATE:** MONTANA  
**GRANT TITLE:** Burbot Status Assessment  
**GRANT AGREEMENT:** T-4-1  
**PERIOD COVERED:** February 3, 2003, through December 31, 2003

### **Location**

Work on this project will occur throughout western Montana, including Montana FWP's Regional Offices in Kalispell, Missoula, Bozeman, Great Falls, and Billings, Montana.

### **Objective**

The objective of this grant is to complete a comprehensive status assessment of burbot in Montana.

### **Accomplishments**

Burbot are the only true freshwater cod species and have holarctic distribution above the 40<sup>th</sup> parallel. In Montana, burbot are native to the Kootenai, Missouri, Saskatchewan, and Yellowstone drainages. However, little is known regarding status burbot throughout Montana. Information regarding burbot is important because fisheries biologists throughout the state are growing increasingly concerned about the fewer numbers of burbot sampled. In addition, the burbot population in the Kootenai River below Kootenai Falls has been petitioned for federal listing as an endangered species; the decline of this population has been attributed to hydroelectric-dam operations in the area. Thus, understanding the status and identifying research needs will assist in conserving this native species. The objective of this project is to complete a comprehensive status assessment of burbot in Montana.

To assess the distribution and status of burbot in Montana, we requested population characteristic data (e.g., length-weight data, catch per effort, population estimates) from fisheries biologists throughout the state in March 2003. Data were received from biologists within the Kootenai, Missouri, and Yellowstone river drainages. In addition to population characteristic data, we wanted to know the opinion of biologists regarding the status of burbot and any management goals established for burbot in their area.

Twenty surveys were sent in April 2003 and seventeen were returned (response rate = 85%). In addition, other anecdotal information was collected from biologists regarding the status of burbot in their area. Information regarding burbot life history and status in surrounding areas has been reviewed and will be part of the literature review in the final report. Most of the long-term data from fisheries biologists throughout Montana has been assessed.

All of the 54 historical sites where burbot were present prior to 1971 contained burbot in 2003. In addition, burbot were sampled at ten additional sites since 1971. Catch per unit effort of burbot was stable or increased for all sampling locations in the Missouri River. Mean relative weight of burbot varied from 72 to 93. Fifty-seven percent of the fisheries biologists surveyed do not know the current status of burbot in their management area. Likewise, 64% of the fisheries biologists in Montana believe that there is not adequate data to make sound management decisions regarding burbot. Nevertheless, there is evidence that burbot populations are stable or increasing in abundance where long-term data from standardized sampling is available. A final report will be completed by May 31, 2004.

## Variances

Completion of the final report will be accomplished in Segment 2, by re-obligating funds that were obligated, but not expended during the course of Segment 1.

## Project Personnel

Ken McDonald	Special Projects Bureau Chief	444-7409	kmcdonald@state.mt.us
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## Expenditure Recap:

### **Grant Agreement Amounts:**

	Federal Share		Non-Federal Share		Totals
Direct	20,000.00		6,667.00		26,667.00
Indirect	4,000.00		1,333.40		5,333.40
	24,000.00	75.00%	8,000.40	25.00%	32,000.40

### **Actual Expenditures:**

	Federal Share		Non-Federal Share		Totals
Direct	13,450.55		4,458.33		17,908.88
Indirect	2,562.15		891.67		3,453.82
	16,012.70	74.96%	5,350.00	25.04%	21,362.70

The non-federal share of funding was in the form of waived overhead (41.5%) by Montana State University (MSU). A total of \$7,987.30 in federal funding remained unspent at the end of Segment 1. An agreement for Segment 2 will be submitted in order to re-obligate these funds, and complete the project.